

2. THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE INDIAN LYNX (*CARACAL CARACAL*)

I have read with interest Sri N. N. Sen's note on the Caracal or the Indian lynx (*Caracal caracal*) published in the August 1959 issue of your journal (56: 317). I saw and shot a caracal in the Saharanpur Forest Division, Uttar Pradesh, in May 1955 under somewhat interesting circumstances. I was staying in the Beribara Forest Rest House and had gone out for an early morning *ghoom* on an elephant. While we were going through scrub forest I saw a male partridge scuttling some fifty yards ahead of the elephant across an open bit of grassland. The partridge disappeared into a tuft of high grass. Immediately afterwards I saw a lithe fawn-coloured body spring into the air in a graceful arc. It looked too light-coloured and elongated for a jackal and I took the elephant near the tuft of grass to investigate what it was. On reaching there I found that the animal had caught the hapless partridge and had already plucked almost all the feathers from its breast. As the animal was neither a jackal nor a wild cat I shot it in order to identify it. One shot with a .22 long rifle cartridge at the base of the skull despatched it.

When we collected the animal I could see that it looked very much like a lynx, pictures of which I had seen in various books. I brought the carcase to the rest house and was able to identify it with the help of a book on Indian animals. I also enquired from the local people who said the animal was called *siyah gosh*, which means 'black ears'. This corresponded with the Hindustani name given for the Caracal in the book of words, as also with the fact that the animal had a pair of black and very pointed ears. The face and body were cat-like but the tail was proportionately shorter and ended in a little pom-pom. The colour of the body was light fawn and the undersides white. The ears were much longer than in the felines and were pointed at the tips which ended in thin plumes of one inch-long black hair. The size of the body was about the same as a jackal's, but it was lower and therefore looked slightly more elongated.

There is an interesting postscript to the tale. After collecting the caracal I asked my orderly to collect the partridge, as I was not averse to eating a partridge freshly killed by the caracal even though it was the close season. To our surprise, when the orderly went to pick it up the partridge got up and ran into the nearest bush, looking for all the world like a young lady who is surprised without any clothes on, and rushes headlong into the nearest cover! That is

the last we saw of that partridge. I still wonder if he grew a new set of breast feathers.

CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS,

TEHRI-GARHWAL CIRCLE, UTTAR PRADESH,

DEHRADUN, U.P.

November 24, 1959.

B. P. SRIVASTAVA

3. TODDY CAT (*PARADOXURUS HERMAPHRODITUS*) AND RUSSELL'S VIPER (*VIPERA RUSSELLI*)

On the morning of 30-11-1959 while motoring through the forest on the Mysore frontier road, I found on the roadside a toddy cat and a large Russell's viper lying dead just opposite each other. The deaths were recent as rigor had not yet set in. The snake had been bitten on the head, the neck, and the tail below the vent; the rest of the body bore no teeth marks. The toddy cat had been bitten on the head near the ear. Obviously they had been fighting with fatal results to both. What is the reason for this jungle tragedy? Will the Editors or any of my readers make a suggestion?

I know small birds and mammals are included in the menu of these palm civets, but why did it tackle this stout, five-foot long Russell's viper, a most venomous antagonist? Vice versa could the snake have taken the aggressive role? This appears improbable in view of the fact that the palm civet was 3 feet 4 inches long and weighed 6 lb., rather too big for the snake to swallow.

Probably they met suddenly and a fight ensued. The snake's venom acted quickly resulting in the death of its opponent on the spot and the snake itself died there from the several bites on its head and neck. Or the toddy cat having formerly successfully tackled smaller and harmless snakes attacked and killed the Russell's viper and carried it to the roadside where it died in its turn.

15 PERUMALKOIL STREET,

FORT, COIMBATORE,

December 15, 1959.

B. SUBBIAH PILLAI